

Stanley Allan Strout – Oral History – 5-5-2002

Mr. Strout: My middle name comes from my grandfather's middle name George Allan Strout. He was in Sebastopol, had a planing mill, and he had the house on Florence Avenue, the old family home which is a historical building here in Sebastopol and I had as a kid, I had been in that quite often. Also later on when a fellow by the name of Quail purchased the property from the Kimballs who, Rowena Kimball was my half aunt, my grandfather remarried and his daughter from that marriage married Kimball, so I have relations that have more or less stayed for a number of years. I don't remember when Quail purchased the property, but from the family. But Dorian Kimball and Joy Kimball, I think it was Joy, her sister, had charge of the property and they sold it. But in any case my grandfather had a planing mill there in Sebastopol, my father and his brothers all lived here and went to school, and went on to college, but while they were living here, they used to get lumber out at the mill and build the boats and sold them I guess to people that used the boats on the lake out there, where there used to be a lake.

Laguna Lake?

Mr. Strout: Yes.

Jonive?

Lake Jonive?

Mr. Strout: Yes, I have photos of that.

Did they have the have that damned up to make it a lake?

Mr. Strout: No, it was a natural as far as I know it was just natural. That Lagoon used to really flood every winter.

But then, would it keep the water?

Mr. Strout: Yes it would stay in there, down there on High School Road down close to Occidental Road, I think is where it was. It ran along there. My father didn't go to Analy High School, I guess. He went to Santa Rosa High.

Oh really!

Mr. Strout: They used to ride,

Because they lived closer there?

Mr. Strout: No, No, they lived on Florence Avenue. But some reason my dad went to Santa Rosa High and he rode the train, the electric train from here over there. My mother went to school here, in fact, I might have given the photographs to the museum already. I had some large about 8 x 10

Mr. Strout: photos of the school, of the whole school. Kids like when they were little, sitting out in front of the school. I had 3 photographs of that.

Which grammar school did you go to?

Mr. Strout: That I don't know. My dad went to Mt. Vernon out there?

On Green Valley?

Mr. Strout: No, no, it's out by Cunningham, that way. My mother lived out there on Baker Lane, I think it was. Is there a Baker Lane out there?

I think so, yes.

Mr. Strout: Yea, they, they lived out there and the videotape that I have a copy of naturally, but I gave a copy to the museum here, has I think. My mother relates partly to that also.

But the earthquake hit in April of 1906, my grand father and grandmother were down in the bay area, cause he had a job down there working on the railroad bringing, they were building a railroad along the coast. My mother, who was taking care of her younger sister at home, when the earthquake hit; and this she says on her video tape "The dresser or bureau or what ever in the bedroom, worked over in the doorway and her younger sister couldn't get out."

Oh my gosh!

Mr. Strout: And here she finally, my mother, finally I guess, climbed through a window or something and got to her and got her out. And they had on the back porch or in the kitchen a cooler, with cans of milk and that all spilt and she said that it ran through the house, out the front door and down the steps. That was kind of comical, in a way. And then when they left Sebastopol to go to, they went down to Oakland, they took the family cow behind my mother's brother, who was born in Sebastopol in 1902. He pulled on the reins on the cow, because they were in wagon anyway, and it went from here down to Petaluma. And they got on a boat down there in Petaluma, so hopeful. But they took the cow and all.

Was it a ferryboat?

Mr. Strout: No, Yea, I guess it was a steamer Gold or one, or probably was Gold. If I remember right. That's what my mother said. That was a popular boat. It left Petaluma and went to the Bay.

So they actually had a service that went all the way?

Mr. Strout: Yes. A regular service. So when they moved that was another kind of comical thing about how they moved in those days.

With cows?

Mr. Strout: Yes. I can't remember the year that they did this, my mother , she was born in 1888 in St. Louis Mo. When the family came out West working the railroad; my grand mother cooked for the railroad crew.

My mother came along, because she was born in St. Louis. And then I was looking back on the family bible and there was a couple of curves – a brother and sister born in Iowa, Spencer Iowa and some other state.

So heading West?

Mr. Strout: Yes, heading West. And one of my aunts Abby, was born in Sebastopol, in 1893, I think it was. And then, my mother's younger brother was born in 1902 in Sebastopol. So I have kind of a tie to the town, there's a street named Strout Street one block long. That's about it that I can think of, unless there's something else you can ask me.

Mr. Strout: This is a neighbor friend of mine, my wife passed away in 1993, but that.

Your grandfather, the one that had the planing mill?

Mr. Strout: Yes.

When did he get to Sebastopol?

Mr. Strout: That I haven't got any knowledge of. I have no idea. He was, there has been published accounts of his being the first mayor of Sebastopol. Now, Whether he was or not.

Now what was his name?

Mr. Strout: George Allan Strout.

Oh that's right, you said that.

Mr. Strout: George Allan Strout. I've got photographs of all of the boys my dad and his brothers, my grandfather on the front porch of the Florence Avenue. And then in another photo.

Something about history?

Mr. Strout: My dad, I guess they all took pictures. My dad had one heck of a lot of photographs. Of course I got all the negatives, he saved them. And they're still good. Negatives are good. I ran across a picture of him and my grandmother by 2nd or 3rd marriage, I think it was, out in front of Florence Avenue on the sidewalk in the house on the background. I didn't print that. Some of these negatives, I didn't make, so when you look at a negative it's kind of hard to really tell all the details that. But I do have all those negatives as a reminder that of those photographs that were taken. We had some down at the Russian River that before they built the bridge at Bridge Haven, a ferryboat went across. There are a lot of pictures, some of them on the lagoon. I gave them to Larry Robinson. Some years ago he was doing something about the environmental earth and he found out that I had some photos, so I loaned the negatives to him so he could get prints. But so there are a lot of photos.

Do you know why your grandfather came to this festival? Or why he settled here?

Mr. Strout: No. All I know is he is buried in Pioneer Cemetery over in Calistoga and they did come through and live in Calistoga for along time.

I see.

Mr. Strout: And I think, I rather think they came basically for their health to Calistoga, because that was a spa or healings. This is something, I before my cousin died, we went over there and we started a search and I have never carried it out. We went to the cemetery, went to the family plot, hoping to find a headstone that would tell which grandmother was buried. My grandmother that I call grandmother was, I never did really know other than what my mother was telling me, because I never saw her. So I don't know who is buried in the family plot because somebody had taken the headstone or whatever; and I never went to the County Recorder to find out. But the plot is marked Strout and he's there for sure. Which would be interesting to find out. I don't know why he came to Sebastopol. I trying to remember why, evidentially he was involved in lumber, because that planing mill is down on, the best I can remember they tell me about it, it was down on south Main, I guess, on the left hand side before the road joins with that Highway 16 coming up.

Where it makes the Y?

Mr. Strout: Yes. Right in that area, I think it where it was. Probably somebody has some history on that.

Do you think it was where the lumber mill was, not the mill but the lumberyard was, that just recently was taken down?

Mr. Strout: Well, it might have been. Was that down in that area?

Yes.

Mr. Strout: Well, it might have been. I do know this; he built the house on Florence Avenue. It was all built from lumber that he milled and most of it is redwood inside. They had the first, the call it an elevator, but the first house in Sebastopol with a Dumb Waiter, really. From the basement up to the kitchen was a tunnel, a tube, and a rope and it had a little elevator and they would bring up stuff.

How many floors were there?

Mr. Strout: Well, there was. The house itself was 2 floors and I think it had some thing up above a little bit. I got some pictures of the old house taken an earthquake. The water tower fell over out back of the house. But, I can remember being near that. It's a two story up. It had a basement. It's still there. Whether they moved it over on the property. Where it's setting right now, was moved east of; it more or less in the center of the lot. Well, when he bought the property, he moved the house over so he could build another house right next to it. He kind of built the other house so it would kind of look like it was built at the same time.

Same era?

Mr. Strout: Yes. So, that has ended that. I haven't been back since it's been a bed and breakfast. I gave some photos of the way it was in 1906. I haven't been back since. It's not a bed and breakfast it's a private residence now.

Is that the house that you grew up in?

Mr. Strout: No, I didn't. I was born in Oakland. My father and my mother met here in Sebastopol. Then, I got all this at home too. I think they were married down there in 19 aa, I was born in 1921, so I'll be 81 next month. They got married in, I think in 1917 or 1918. I guess they were probably married in the Bay Area because I was born in Oakland. Then I went to Fairfax. When I was a little kid and of course started school. My dad had a job with Union Oil. Went over there and lived in Fairfax. I can remember Fairfax as a little kid. Then we went back to Berkeley and we lived in Berkeley. I started, well I was six. I didn't go to kindergarten, but I started grammar school in Berkeley. And then I lived there until 1936. In 36 my folks moved to Santa Rosa and I went to Santa Rosa High. The same high school that my dad went to and also Robert Ripley was in his class in high school in Santa Rosa.

Oh my gosh!

Mr. Strout: I had, in Santa Rosa High, when I went through there in 36. I graduated in 39. So 37, 8, and 9 I had a teacher, my dad's English teacher in Study Hall. She didn't teach, she was pretty old. But I had her for Study Hall, you see.

Did she remember him?

I can't remember. I know one thing, she ruled that Study Hall with an iron fist. So that was kind of interesting, in that way. Then, well myself, personally, I lived after that, I lived in Santa Rosa, went to the junior college and then went into the Air Core was in India and China for 3 years and when I came back, I never left Santa Rosa. I've been there ever since. Retired 17 – 18 years ago, I guess it was.

So this Strout Realty, is that?

Mr. Strout: No as far as we can tell, that Strout Realty is not a relation, but the name itself is not too common. Strout, anywheres. I used to go, when I would go to another town, I would look in a phone book to see if there is any Strouts. My cousin started a genealogy thing. He went clear back to Lisbon and that's where his father was born. No, yes. No, he wasn't born there. Where was his father born? Well the boys went to high school, here in Sebastopol. So my dad was born in Fargo, North Dakota and put, I'm trying to think, the whole family started, my cousin traced it back to Maine, and even to some towns where they had records of the Strouts. The genealogy, my daughter is trying to work out now. She lives in Southern California. She's kind of took the ball, I don't know what she's done really.

Mr. Strout: Anyway, that's about all I can mention that I know to you about them. My dad used to bring the family up from the bay area from Berkeley in the summer time and we camped on the Russian River at Rio Dell. My mother, my sister and myself and once in awhile my cousin would stay with us. Way back when we were kids, I have a photo of me and my cousin on the trussel there in Mirabell on the railroad. My dad would come up on weekends on the train and spend the weekend in Rio Dell and then get on a train and go back to the Bay Area to work. And that I can remember. I've got photographs of Rio Dell and that was quite a thing. A met lot of people, kids that were my age, that lived in this area and they went to Anlay High. So when I moved up here in 36.

You had contacts, here?

Mr. Strout: Yes, I knew what people who went to Anlay High. I didn't know anybody in Santa Rosa High. Seagal was one of them. Rolands. I knew a lot of kids in Anlay High. Olmans, in fact, Edith Olman and I ran around together; she was I think a class behind me and her sister was a class ahead of me, Connie. Their father had an Olman processing, apple processing and Santa products in Graton. So we had a great time, us kids. It was great.

It was fun we remember?

Mr. Strout: I don't know. What else could I say?

You mentioned Fairfax? You mean Marin County?

Mr. Strout: Yes.

Oh, I lived there for awhile.

Mr. Strout: Oh were you?

But was the connection with oil?

Mr. Strout: When he worked for Union Oil, he was a delivery. I don't know what year it was; they had a terrific fire up there in the hills. He was with his gas truck, his gasoline truck. We lived on, boy I thought I would never forget that name of the street, but I can't remember right now.

Up into the hills or right in town?

Mr. Strout: No it more or less in town, because it was I can remember the store at the bottom. There was a car railroad that went up out of the, in Fairfax there. There was store. Right behind the store there was this hill and there was the car railroad that went up there. A regular train type thing, in Fairfax. The electric trains went in there. The orange trains, I think it was that ran up from San Rafael, went on to Fairfax. I think it was the end of the line. I can remember that part of it. That's about all.

They must have had fires regularly up there?

Mr. Strout: Well yea, there was a great fire.

I remember when I was there vacationing.

Mr. Strout: I can remember this, my mom was really worried about my dad. My dad was out with his truck and there was a fire and he's got gasoline. Anyway, that's about all I remember about it. Well I wasn't ready to start school; I was 6 or 5. And I hadn't been to school yet, so I wasn't that old. My mother was 97 when she passed away.

Wow! A long-lived family!

Mr. Strout: Yes, and she wasn't even. I built the house for her behind my house in Santa Rosa. It's a little 2 bedroom house all insulated nice. She lived there by herself. Not sick or nothin. My wife, mother never drove, and my wife would take her downtown to get her hair fixed once a week, rain or shine. She just got tired, 97 years old and I had to take her to the hospital. But she had no problems, you know.

Your'e lucky.

Mr. Strout: I was lucky. She just got tired. In fact, when she was 82, she fell in my house, down some steps, and broke her ankle. I thought, oh boy this is it! You know she'll be on crutches or whatever. And so the doctor was showing the x-rays to everybody and her how her ankle healed like a young persons. He put some steel pins and screws in there. She never needed a cane. She would have it, but she never needed it.

Good bones, huh?

Mr. Strout: Yea, I take her, her meal and she could read without her glasses.

She didn't need glasses?

Mr. Strout: I needed glasses to read. So, she was. My dad died when he was 78, I guess it was. I figure I'm going to outlast em all and live to be 100.

Laughter.

Mr. Strout: Now on my mother's side, the Cougarants, they lived in Sebastopol. Her father, or course, was the one who built the railroads. Build the railroads, and he worked on the one that come to the house up to Tomales through up there through Monte Rio. But they were down, I think they call it the North Coast Railroad. Although they were trying to build out in Santa Cruz or San Francisco down the coast, whatever when the earthquake hit. But they lived out, they had an orchard, I guess, probably apples I guess, out of town.

Do you know where?

Mr. Strout: Yea, I think it's on Baker Lane. One time, I think they moved a couple of times. But that's where she met my father. In Sebastopol. Then mother had brothers and a couple of sisters, they have

Mr. Strout: all passed on also. She outlived most of them. And she was about the oldest. She was born in 1888. Then the rest of them were born on the way out to California. And two of them in Sebastopol. They got a peace pipe from Sitting Bull coming across. It's in the Cougaran side of the family, they got it. My mother didn't even know my dad then.

Do you know the story about that? How did that happen?

Mr. Strout: Well my mother used tell, that every time that in the morning when her mother, my grandmother, would go into the cook car to cook breakfast for the railroad workers, there would be Indians in there. And they'd sitting down and they wanted to eat.

Food and drink?

Mr. Strout: We were in their country, you know, Indian territory. They weren't about to not feed em. The story went, I don't know how true it is; that my grandfather, however he talked to Sitting Bull, I don't know, but, Sitting Bull wanted to trade squaws. And my mother said, he said, "Naw, you wouldn't want my squaw, she don't work!"

Laughter

Mr. Strout: And he, so anyway, that's the story of Sitting Bull; ending up, gave him a Peace Pipe. I video taped that. My cousin's have it and I got a little short picture of the Peace Pipe. They still have it. They live down in the Bay Area. So that was. A lot of interesting things happened back in those days. I don't think if I could tell you anymore about Sebastopol.

Tell the story of the Power House, the big?

Mr. Strout: Oh, ok. My uncle Arch, Archie Strout, worked going to high school, and he worked part time and he worked for the railroad here in Sebastopol. His job was to get up early in the mornin and put the electricity into the lines that ran the electric cars. And he threw, I'm not sure of the time, but when ever the earth quake hit, when was that, I think it April 12th? Wasn't it 1906? He threw the main switch to put the current into energize all the lines, so that all the electric cars. And at the time he did that, the earthquake hit and he thought he did it. The generators started to hop around off their mounds. And he couldn't believe and he thought he did it. He had caused that. Until he found out it was an earthquake.

Laughter

Mr. Strout: So that's about all I know about that one. The other uncles, they, I have met them all and talked to them, as a young person, a little kid. But they all left the area and went other ways. There's a doctor back in Minneapolis; one of them went into mining and was a mining engineer; one was a got into water softeners and filters in they Bay Area, way back when nobody knew what a water softeners was. So they all. My dad worked with the Union. In the Depression they all I guess, didn't do very much. But my dad worked, I think, worked for a saw things near Portland Cement. Selling, trying to sell people to buy stock or whatever it was.

Oh well.

Mr. Strout: Cause he went up to Canada and spent some time up there because I saw some paperwork People up there owed him some money and they paid him, you know. He had receipts and stuff.

This is before he married?

Mr. Strout: Yea, it was before. My mother always talked about it, but she never went, up there. He went up there on business quite a bit. But she, I remember her talking about it, Canada. Way later on my wife and I took a trip and we went to Harrison Hot Springs and she says, "That's where dad was." Out of Vancouver. So, she went. In the grammar school, I tried to find those photos I have and I might have given them to the museum. I don't remember that part. But, the school, all three pictures of three different years, is the same schoolhouse. A local, person that is knowledgeable about schools if they could see the building they would know what school it was. Cause all the kids are lines up in front, sittin on the steps, no shoes, kids, the front row of the kids the boys don't have any shoes on or anything and my mother, couldn't have very old, she was born in 1888. She was maybe, this is way before 1906, cause she was old enough to go to...

To go to grammar school?

Mr. Strout: Yes, because I think on the tape she mentions how old she was when the earthquake. Cause she was left in charge of watching her younger sister.

Oh, Right.

Mr. Strout: With her mother and father down there in the Bay Area. So, I don't know a lot of things, until now, are kind out of your memory, out of your mind and are hard to pull some of that stuff out.

That was great! A lot of good stories.

Mr. Strout: Anyway, that's as close as I can come to stuff that's happened with my family.

Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Strout: When the earthquake hit in Sebastopol, it leveled a lot of town buildings and my dad had taken photographs of some of the buildings, I don't know where they were. But earlier years I never thought to ask my mother or my dad, other than they were in Sebastopol. The streets, one of them, you can the painting on the wall, there's some kind of printer. Then this one building, which was made out of brick and everything, it was leveled. Behind it is a building that was made out of wood and it's kind of a official type building, it's got two towers, it's got two windmills, pumps, and it's got flags on it, but you can't read what's on the building. But it's in the background behind this rubble. And then the Analy Hotel. I remember that because my mother always said, that's the Analy Hotel. And it was a two story. And it's leveled to what looked like a one story. All windows, no doorways, you know? The side of the building facing the camera. And then the train, some Pacific Fruit cars, I think in part, down there off of where the train went down and cut through a field past there where the museum is, where the train station is. Right in there, the track, I think, curved and went down through

Mr. Strout: a field, at least in the photo there is a field, no buildings and there's some sign on the hill and a little higher, not really a hill, but it might have been down toward, well it probably make a cut for the railroad to start with. It's not the main one that went south, though. It branched off, anyway, that's a picture in Forestville. There's a train up there, I saw it in the one in the books here. A fellow had a picture and he gave me credit for the photo of a train to Forestville. And then I've got about 3 photos of the electric train and half of it was a mail car. Half the car was only seats half the car, the other half was solid with a door way for loading all stuff. You can see the name Forestville and there was hand pumps for water.

Oh yea, yea.

Mr. Strout: I can remember that clearly. I've got all those negatives. And I'm sure the museum downtown got all those photos.

Great!

Mr. Strout: Cause, I think there's 67 of em that they copied. If they copied them all.